CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for controlling an electronic conference session between a plurality of terminals, said method comprising:

assigning an identifier to each terminal among a plurality of terminals;

associating at least one identifier with a particular class of terminals among a plurality of classes; and

thereafter, automatically controlling an aspect of participation in the electronic conference session for each terminal of the plurality of terminals assigned with an identifier associated with the particular class.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic conference session is a teleconference and at least one of the plurality of terminals includes a telephone.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the electronic conference session is a video-conference and at least one of the plurality of terminals includes a video monitor.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of controlling comprises controlling an aspect of participation in the electronic conference session for two or more terminals of the plurality of terminals having identifiers associated with the designated class.

5. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of providing a terminal among the plurality of terminals with access to the electronic conference session in response to receiving an identifier for the terminal.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier represents a role in the electronic conference session for a user of the terminal.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of controlling includes modifying an electronic connection between two or more terminals among the plurality of terminals.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein the step of modifying includes terminating the electronic connection.

9. A method according to claim 7, wherein the electronic connection is an audio-visual connection and the step of modifying includes terminating an audio portion of the audio-visual connection.

10. A method according to claim 7, wherein the electronic connection is an audio-visual connection and the step of modifying includes terminating a video portion of the audio-visual connection.

11. A system for controlling an electronic conference session among a plurality of terminals, said system comprising:

a controller connected to the plurality of terminals that receives signals representing each user accessing the electronic conference, wherein the session controller assigns each user to a particular class from among a plurality of classes and performs a function to control an aspect of participation in the electronic conference for each user assigned to a selected class of the plurality of classes.

12. A system according to claim 11, wherein the plurality of terminals are connected by one or more communication paths, each of the plurality providing a user access to the electronic conference via at least one communication path of the one or more communication paths, along which signals representing the user can be transmitted.

13. A system according to claim 11, wherein the electronic conference is a teleconference and the plurality of terminals includes a telephone.

14. A system according to claim 11, wherein the electronic conference is a video-conference and the plurality of terminals includes a video monitor.

15. A system according to claim 11, wherein the controller assigns each user to a particular class from among a plurality of classes in response to the signals.

16. A system according to claim 11, wherein the function includes modifying one or more communication paths of the one or more communication paths between two or more terminals of the plurality of terminals.

17. A system according to claim 11, wherein the function includes disconnecting one or more communication paths of the one or more communication paths.

18. A method for controlling participation in a teleconference, said method comprising:

initiating the teleconference between a plurality of participants interconnected by electronic terminals;

associating each participant of the plurality of participants with a class among a plurality of classes; and

terminating the teleconference for participants of a selected class, while continuing the teleconference for one or more other classes of the plurality of classes.

19. A method according to claim 17, wherein the step of associating includes associating as a function of a code entered into an electronic terminal by a participant as part of a process for gaining access to the teleconference.

20. A method according to claim 17, wherein the step of terminating includes selecting the selected class as a function of a code entered into an electronic terminal by a leader.

21. A method according to claim 19, wherein the leader is one of the plurality of participants.

22. A program product for controlling participation in a teleconference comprising:

a computer-readable medium;

a controller function encoded in the computer-readable medium, the controller function comprising the steps of:

initiating the teleconference between a plurality of participants interconnected by electronic terminals;

associating each participant of the plurality of participants with a class among a plurality of classes; and

terminating the teleconference for participants of a selected class, while continuing the teleconference for one or more other classes of the plurality of classes.

23. A program product according to claim 21, wherein the step of associating includes associating as a function of a code entered into an electronic terminal by a participant as part of a process for gaining access to the teleconference.

24. A program product according to claim 21, wherein the step of terminating includes selecting the selected class as a function of a code entered into an electronic terminal by a leader.

25. A program product according to claim 21, wherein the leader is one of the plurality of participants.